

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, and 8 are pending in the application.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 3, and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hara (JP 2004-162936) in view of Ohata (USP 4,426,923). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 has been amended to claim:

the side jet hole is located below the supporting means, such that the steam from each side jet hole enters into a space defined by and below the supporting means, flows in the lateral direction under the supporting means, and meets under the food.

This feature is shown in Fig. 5 and described in paragraph [0041] of the specification of the present application.

In the Office Action, the Examiner acknowledges that the Hara reference does not disclose or suggests the side jet hole that is located below the supporting means, such that the steam from the side jet hole flows inside a space defined immediately below the supporting means in a lateral direction.

Therefore, the Examiner relies on the Ohata reference and alleges that it discloses, in Fig. 2, steam guided from a sub-cavity located in the ceiling of a heating chamber in which the steam is directed to a side jet hole on each side of the heating chamber, and also that it discloses, in Fig. 6, a heating chamber having two oppositely opposing side ducts that have openings at the bottom of the heating chamber where the steam enters through apertures 25.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of Fig. 2 of the Ohata reference that the portions of the passage 6 where it bends in a horizontal direction below the ventilating net 8 correspond to the "side jet hole" of the present invention because the passage 6 merely provides hot air (heated by heaters 9) and does not jet out "steam in a lateral direction of the heating chamber," as recited in claim 1.

Further, as shown in Fig. 2 of the Ohata reference, the hot air that flows inside the air passages 6 is directed to a space defined by and below the ventilating net 8 (and not by the shelf 13, which corresponds to the "supporting means" of the present invention), and is directed in an upward direction into the heating chamber towards the shelf 13 thorough the ventilating net 8. Therefore, the heated air (mixed with steam discharged from the port 18 in the space defined by the ventilating net) does not enter into "a space defined by and below the supporting means, flows in the lateral direction under the supporting means, and meets under the food," as recited in claim 1.

Applicants also submit that, as shown in Fig. 6 of the Ohata reference, the air (not steam) enters into the heating chamber through air discharge ports 25. Therefore, although the Examiner alleges that the air discharge ports 25 correspond to the "side jet hole" of the present invention, Applicants respectfully disagree because the air discharge ports 25 merely discharge air (see col. 5, lines 24-29 of Ohata), and does not jet out "steam in a lateral direction of the heating chamber," as recited in claim 1.

Further, as shown in Fig. 6, air discharged from the ports 25 is immediately directed in an upward direction as shown by the arrows, and does not flow "in the lateral direction under the

supporting means, and meets under the food,” as recited in claim 1. Ohata merely states, in col. 5, lines 28-29 that “The air entering the storage chamber 1 is circulated therein.”

In view of this, even assuming that Hara and Ohata can be combined, which Applicants do not admit, one skilled in the art would, at best, modify Hara such that hot air (as disclosed in Fig. 2) or air (as disclosed in Fig. 6) is jetted out into the heating chamber, and would not conceive jetting out “steam” as required in claim 1.

Further, even assuming that the hot air or the air corresponds to the “steam” of the present invention, which Applicants do not admit, the hot air or the air does not enter “into a space defined by and below the supporting means,” flow “in the lateral direction under the supporting means, and meet “under the food,” as recited in claim 1.

Further, claim 1 claims:

a fan that increases strength of steam jetted out through the upper jet hole and the side jet hole

In the Office Action, the Examiner alleges that Ohata teaches a fan (7) that moves steam from the cooking chamber to be recirculated to apertures positioned on the lower part of each side wall of the heating chamber (see Fig. 2).

Applicants respectfully submit, however, that in Ohata, the steam generator 14 is disposed under the center of the bottom of the heating chamber and simply discharges steam upward from the discharge port 18. The steam generator 14 of Ohata is not provided with a fan that increases the strength with which the steam is jetted out.

Therefore, Ohata fails to disclose or suggest the foregoing feature of the present invention.

Claims 3 and 8, dependent on claim 1, are allowable at least for their dependency on claim 1.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Conclusion

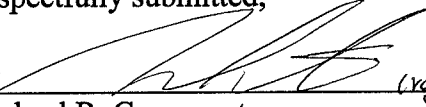
Accordingly, in view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and objections, and allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Maki Hatsumi Reg. No. 40,417 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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